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## TEACHERS' SALARIES AND COST OF LIVING.

BY L. D. ARNETT.

Within the last decade several important investigations have been made bearing on the question of teachers' salaries. As a result a very considerable amount of data has been collected which indicates the position the teacher occupies in the class of salaried and wage-earning people and also to some extent the status of the teaching profession. The facts thus brought together have served a good purpose, because they have in general directed attention to some of the obstacles in the way of a teaching profession, among which may be mentioned low salaries, insecurity of the teaching position, and the short annual school term.

In the light of these investigations I wish to consider the question of salaries and cost of living. The teaching body from the kindergarten or rural school up to the university includes practically as many classes of teachers as there are classes of schools. To whichever class the teacher may belong, he enjoys a high social position in the community and as a result is expected to maintain a standard of living in proportion to his position. In the higher ranks this position compares favorably with that of the doctor or lawyer. In the lower ranks it is higher than that of persons who receive an equal amount of salary in other pursuits. And therefore, a statement which I wish to make at the outset is that the relation, in general, between occupations and social position, and consequently standard of living, while it may vary to some extent for different occupations, does not hold true for the teaching profession.

As has been mentioned frequently in articles on the subject, there are several factors which influence salaries. Among these may be mentioned the number of available teachers in the local district, the professional training and experience of teachers, a minimum salary law, and finally the wealth and progressive spirit of the community.

These factors I shall not stop to discuss, but pass to some of the recent investigations of salaries in which they are considered.

I wish to speak first of one conducted within the past year by the Association of Collegiate Alumnae. This organization is composed of about two thousand graduates of women's colleges and co-educational institutions. The members of the organization are located in different parts of the country, and the investigation is based upon returns from 460 members. They estimate that the lowest salary a college woman can be expected to live upon is \$500. They find, however, that 193 out of 307 teachers receive an initial salary of \$500 or less, that 66 receive as an initial salary \$400, and 33 receive only \$300. They also find that 71 of this number receive from \$600 to \$700, 22 receive \$800, and 21 from \$900 to \$1,100. But by way of contrast they find that similar conditions exist in other occupations than teaching. Twenty-three out of forty-two college graduates commenced their occupations at a salary of \$500 or less and ten received from \$600 to \$700.

They find that salaries increase with duration of service as follows: Of 335 teaching salaries considered, twenty-seven per cent. are from \$700 to \$900, and in order to reach this wage, eleven have been teaching two years; seven, three years; fourteen, from four to six years; sixteen, from six to eight years; ten, from eight to eleven years; six, from eleven to fifteen years; and two, over fifteen years. Of the fifty-three teachers earning from \$900 to \$1,100, twenty-seven have been working over six years and seventeen over eight years; and of the fifty-two earning \$1,100 to \$1,200, thirty-two have been working over ten years. In regard to the effect of experience on salaries, they conclude that the teacher must expect to await from ten to fifteen years in order to receive a salary of \$1,200 or more.

A majority of those reporting expend from \$200 to \$250 a year for clothing and they estimate the lowest cost for board at from \$6 to \$9 a week. Less than one half the number spend fifty to one hundred dollars each year in travel. The study concludes with some recommendations, one of which is that the organization endeavor to direct women into other lines of work than teaching.

The Illinois Educational Commission in an investigation conducted within the last two years, found that the average salary of women employed in the rural schools of that state was \$39.62 a month and that they received about \$250 a

year. The average salaries of men in the rural schools was \$47.47. They estimated that the cost of food which in 1907 averaged \$374.75 per family, is somewhat less than one half the expenditure of the entire family. A salary of forty dollars per month, an amount paid in some counties of the state for seven and one half months in the year, is less than half enough to support a family. In regard to the effect of low salaries they conclude by saying: "Clearly, then, at the present rate of wages we must depend largely upon unmarried women for our supply of teachers. This may not mean poor teaching, but it does mean that so long as this is the case teaching cannot become a profession." The commission concludes its investigation by recommending the enactment of a minimum salary law.

A more exhaustive investigation was made by the Minnesota Educational Association in 1906. This investigation is based upon returns from 1,000 teachers and with the coöperation of the teachers, data was collected bearing on the question of wages in general. They found that the average annual salary for all Minnesota teachers was \$411. In comparison with other occupations they found that the average annual teachers' salary was less than the annual wage received by the following classes of laborers: Farms laborers, railroad section men, painters, boiler-makers, carpenters, machinists, plasterers, plumbers, printers, steam-fitters, stone-masons, blacksmiths and stone cutters.

They also state, as a result of low salaries and the insecurity of the teaching position in Minnesota, that more than fifty-eight high school superintendents have left the teaching ranks within the last ten years. They mention as causes for low salaries, "lack of appreciation," "low standards, hence too many teachers," "no professional spirit," "teachers not sufficiently organized," "lack of funds," etc. The investigation concludes by recommending that hereafter the license to teach be restricted to those persons who have had at least one year of professional training, that no license be granted to persons under eighteen years of age, and that a law be enacted fixing a minimum salary.

Other investigations might be mentioned but enough data have been given to indicate that salaries are low and that the best educational results can not be secured under such conditions.

Teachers' salaries have however been steadily rising for several years. As a rule, they have been fixed with reference, more especially, to the standards admitting to the teaching ranks, and while there is no method of measurement they have in a fair degree kept pace with these. Within recent years the cost of living, as an additional factor in determining the amount of salary, has been demanding an increased amount of attention by boards. I wish to compare, briefly, the rate of increase of salaries with the rate of increase of cost of living.

From the latest statistics of the Bureau of Education, the average monthly salary of male teachers in the public schools of the United States for 1907-08 was \$62.35, and for female teachers, \$51.61, while for 1897-98, the average for male teachers was \$45.16, and for female teachers, \$38.74. This shows, as far as we have data on the question, that during the ten years preceding 1907-08, the average monthly salary of male teachers increased \$17.19 or about 38 per cent., and that for the same period the average monthly salary of female teachers, increased \$12.87 or about 33 per cent. From a recent bulletin of the Bureau of Labor we find that the retail prices of food increased 25.2 per cent. during the same period and that the wages of labor increased 29.3 per cent. These comparisons are based upon data for the entire country.

The Middlesex County Teachers' Association of Massachusetts in 1906, found that the "living expenses of the teachers in twenty-two towns and cities in the county had increased 19.3 per cent. during the past ten years, while the salaries of these teachers had increased 10.8 per cent. during that time."

Professor Adams, of the University of Nevada, in a report recently published, says that "Teachers' salaries in Nevada when considered in relation to the cost of living, have fallen about 30 per cent. below the 1896 level." That is to say, the cost of living has risen very much faster than teachers' salaries.

Superintendent Barr, of Stockton, California, in a recommendation to the board of education, estimated that salaries increased only \$11.39 or less than one and one half per cent. during the period from 1887 to 1907 and that the cost of living increased from 25 to 30 per cent. The state superintendent of Wyoming in his biennial report for 1907-08 says that "salaries of teachers have not increased correspondingly with the

increased cost of living, nor in proportion to the increase in remuneration in other lines of work generally."

Comparisons and estimates for other localities might be mentioned. The data which I have given indicates that in some parts of the country the cost of living has increased faster than salaries, but for the country as a whole, for the period from 1897-1907, the average monthly salary of public school teachers increased faster than the cost of living.

It has been suggested that the total annual amounts afford the only correct standards for comparing wages and salaries with the cost of living. The per cent. of increase as shown by the reports of the Bureau of Education is based upon the monthly salary, and does not take into consideration the wide difference of length of the school term in different parts of the country and is therefore misleading to that extent.

At a salary of \$50 a month, an increase of ten per cent. would add \$25 to the annual salary for a term of five months, but would add \$45 for a term of nine months. Hence when all the factors are considered the results will probably show that salaries have not increased as rapidly as the cost of living and as local data indicates that in many sections of the country they are below the teacher's estimate of the cost of living, according to the standard he is expected to maintain, and further, that they are too low for the best interests of the school.

This brings me to the question of measures of relief and I wish to consider only the more important suggestions and remedies mentioned in the investigations. A remedy suggested by the Collegiate Alumnæ is that the number of teachers be reduced by directing college graduates into other pursuits. This plan would lessen the competition, and if executed very extensively, would certainly affect salaries. Graduates of colleges are needed in public school work and a plan of this kind would hardly commend itself to superintendents and principals of public schools. A second remedy suggested is the minimum salary law. Such laws have been enacted in Indiana, Maryland, New Jersey, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia. All cities that have adopted salary schedules, which provide for an increase of salary based on experience, follow the same plan. The law fixes the minimum monthly annual salary and thus establishes a standard. It is

claimed that the general effect of such a measure is good in that it operates to increase salaries above the minimum.

A third remedy suggested is that teachers be paid for twelve months in the year. This plan of payment is followed in a few cities, viz., Hoboken, Jersey City, Oakland and San Francisco, and has been recommended by superintendents of other cities. A final suggestion is that of publicity of facts. If all the facts relating to low salaries, the rate of increase of salaries, and the rate of increase of the cost of living, are made known to the public, and certainly to the salary board much better results might be obtained. No harm can come from such a method and much good may follow. This plan as a means of arousing interest in behalf of teachers' salaries is to be commended.

In conclusion I wish to say that the question of a high or low salary rests very largely with the teaching body. In its broader sense it should concern not only the teacher but the entire community. The manufacturer knows the value of skilled workmen; the merchant, the value of superior salesmen; they admit that it is economy to pay a higher wage in order to retain this class of help. The public should realize that the same economic principle is true in the conduct of schools. Enlightenment in these matters as well as in all of those that concern the question of salaries must come from the teaching body. During the past year salaries were increased in a comparatively large number of cities and towns. Special legislation regarding teachers' pensions, affecting either certain cities, or the state as a whole, was enacted in California, Maryland, Minnesota, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Virginia and Wisconsin.

One state, New Jersey, enacted a fairly permanent tenure of office law. Centralization of rural schools is in progress in some parts of the country.

These movements are significant, and while they do not all contribute to the immediate welfare of the teacher, they do contribute to the advancement of the cause of a teaching profession, and indirectly to the cause of higher salaries.

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WASHINGTON, D. C.